STATEMENT MADE ON THE ESTABLISHMENT OF A MEMORIAL FOUNDATION FOR HIS IMPERIAL MAJESTY HAILE SELASSIE I

Since His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I was the Patron of the Ethiopian Patriotic Association, the Association submitted a request to the then Transitional Government of Ethiopia to the effect that the remains of His Imperial Majesty be searched and exhumed.

Pursuant to this request, and with the cooperation and efforts exerted by the Transitional Government, after a search which lasted two days, the remains of His Imperial Majesty was carefully exhumed on 16 February 1992 from the unseemly place where it was hidden. These are facts which the Ethiopian people already know.

Upon the finding of the remains, a committee, charged with the task of preparing the programme for the laying of the remains to rest in the Holy Trinity Cathedral, was constituted. While this committee was speeding up the preparation of the programme, representatives of the people appeared before it and requested that "the remains of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I should be laid to its final rest with fitting honour, and to have sufficient time for the preparation, it should temporarily rest at the monastery of Taeka Negest Baata Lemariam."

The Royal Family having agreed with the proposal, by letter of request from the Patriotic Association, His Imperial Majesty's remains was laid in trust within Taeka Negest Baata Lemariam monastery. Four years have now elapsed since this event.

With the permission of the Transitional Government the remains of Ethiopians who were atrociously killed and thrown into unseemly nooks were searched, collected, laid to rest in honours and memorials erected for them as appropriate.

On the other hand, although the Government has permitted that the remains of His Imperial Majesty be, likewise, laid to rest in honour outside of political context, it still remains in Taeka Negest Baata Lemariam monastery where it has been left in trust.

The contribution of His Imperial Majesty Haile Selassie I to the development of Ethiopia during the long period of his leadership shall be chronicled in detail in due course. Suffice it to underscore here the fact that his tireless endeavors, in particular, for the safeguarding of Ethiopia's independence and unity, for its history to be prominently appreciated worldwide, for enriching the social life of the Ethiopian people, for its progress in education and acquisition of knowledge are already well known. That his efforts were successful is similarly all too evident.

Moreover, His Imperial Majesty's valiant struggle both in the battle-field and the political arena whenever the country faced strong challenges from the outside, and his unshakable trust in the eventual triumph of justice has earned Ethiopia the admiration of the peoples of the world.

His Imperial Majesty is one who has struggled for African unity, freedom and peace and achieved outstanding results.

To found and preserve a permanent memorial to the Emperor who was the great leader of Ethiopia and father of Africa, for the great leadership service he rendered to Africa, as well as the world, and his share of mediation role is a lofty and sacred duty to be expected of the great Ethiopian people. Indeed, that is why representative of the people opposed right from the beginning the transfer of the remains to the Holy Trinity Cathedral with inadequate organization.

The Ethiopian People who love his Imperial Majesty and renowned foreigners who have genuine admiration for his work and achievements have, during the last four years, expressed their regret, sadness and anguish over the fact that His Imperial Majesty's remains has not been laid to rest with proper honour and ceremony. This fact has, similarly, denied rest to the conscience of those Ethiopians who believe in equity and justice. It is evident that, to be spared the judgement of history and enduring anguish, moving the remains with honour and laying it to rest in the mausoleum within the Holy Trinity Cathedral constructed during the lifetime of the Emperor and establishing an appropriate memorial remains to be a major and timely duty.

Following discussions held by prominent Ethiopians, a committee comprising of representatives of the Royal Family, the Ethiopian people and the Patriotic Association has established a body known as "The Haile Selassie I Memorial Foundation" to accomplish this lofty objective.

The committee has submitted an application along with the founding document of the organization to the competent government department. We have no doubt that the Haile Selassie I Memorial Foundation shall have broad contribution of ideas, as well as material and financial support from equity and justice loving people within Ethiopia and abroad. We are hopeful that patriotic Ethiopians and foreign friends of His Imperial Majesty have taken due cognizance of the establishment of the Foundation through this statement.

The Haile Selassie I Memorial Foundation which has just been established is, at present, led by an executive committee composed of 27 members, it is carrying out its activities together with the seven (7) technical committees it has set up under its supervision.

In this connection, we would like to assure everyone that we shall, from time to time, issue statements to the public regarding public participation, registration of membership and payment of dues, and that our door shall always be open to representatives of the mass media who may seek any clarifications.

Bitwoded Zewde Gebre-Hiwot
Chairman of the Executive Committee
Haile Selassie I Memorial Foundation